

January 31, 2006

### **FROM THE PRINCIPAL'S DESK**

It is hard to believe that we are ending our first semester in our new school. Each day, I as well as the staff, continue to marvel at what a wonderful building this is. It is so nice to see students using the expanse of the hallways, to hear that students are standing and pivoting to assist with their getting onto changing tables, and the general student improvement influenced by the design of the building.

Our program, however, is more than a building. The building contributes to allowing us to teach what our students need to learn. Our emphasis continues to be teaching based on a Life Skills curriculum.

We are also continuing our Community Based Instruction (CBI), thanks to buses that are assigned to our campus. Each class has a CBI trip scheduled one time each week. We do the CBI because our students learn best when the learning takes place in a natural environment. If we want students to have functional use of communication systems, then it is best to have them use their systems at a real McDonald's to order a lunch. If we want students to learn proper behaviors in a grocery store, it is best to take them to the grocery store and teach in that natural setting. These are just a few examples of why we have continued with our CBI.

Something else is occurring because of our new school and new school location. It is the involvement that our students are having with their non-disabled age appropriate peers. At all levels, preschool through high school, interactions are taking place. I thank our three Inclusion Liaison Teachers (Mary LaRocco, Mel Preston, Wendy Cohen-Holbrook) for making this happen. We know that there is still room to grow with our Inclusion efforts, but they are happening at an appropriate pace. The really exciting part dealing with Inclusion efforts, is that there are teachers in the general education schools asking how they can become involved with our students. Many more opportunities will be created as time goes on.

I feel that because of our new school and location, our students are getting both the curriculum and program that they need, while having opportunities to be involved with age appropriate peers. It really feels good to see all of this happening. It has been a good beginning!!

**Nicholas P. Girardi**  
**Principal**

#### Mission Statement

The Mission of the Cedar Lane School is to educate students with special needs in a setting that is respectful of diversity, that fosters growth and development, while respecting the human dignity of all students, allowing each student to develop skills which will enable them to reach optimum levels of functioning, and independence.